



Congress of the United States
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March 4, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

As a member of Congress who represents a district that is both urban and rural, I am writing to express my concern over equitable vaccine distribution in rural areas throughout the United States and request that you make distribution of COVID-19 vaccines to the pharmacies serving these communities a higher priority.

As you know, Washington state was the first state in the U.S. to have a confirmed case of COVID-19 in January of 2020. The virus has caused more than 5,000 deaths in the state since that time. The approval of the Emergency Use Authorization for the Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson vaccines brought hope that the end of this pandemic is in sight. How quickly we get there, however, will depend largely on overcoming hurdles that are inhibiting equitable distribution of the vaccine, specifically to rural communities.

More than 60 million Americans live in rural areas.¹ Before the pandemic, these communities already struggled with access to broadband, inadequate health care networks, and insufficient childcare resources. They also experience a higher risk of health disparities exacerbated by geographic isolation, socioeconomic status, high risk health behaviors, limited access to health care specialists and limited job opportunities.² The pandemic has caused these divides to grow significantly deeper.

In your COVID-19 vaccination plan, you highlight the importance of meeting the needs of all communities.³ This plan specifically acknowledges the need to provide organizations like rural health clinics and Federal Qualified Health Centers with the ability to access the vaccine directly.

Additionally, your administration announced an initiative to deliver vaccines directly to retail pharmacies throughout the United States.⁴ While I applaud this effort, big chain drugstores are limited, if nonexistent in many rural areas. For this reason, small and independent pharmacies must be prioritized for vaccine deliveries.⁵ I urge you to immediately expand the guidelines for

¹ [Defining Rural at the U.S. Census Bureau](#)

² [Rural Health Information Hub, Rural Health Disparities](#)

³ [The White House, President-elect Biden Outlines COVID-19 Vaccination Plan](#)

⁴ [CNBC News, Biden administration will start sending Covid vaccines directly to pharmacies as it ups shipments to states](#)

⁵ [Pew Trusts, Without a Ride, Many in Need Have No Shot at COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

this program to ensure that small and independent pharmacies are receiving larger allocations of vaccines so that all Americans have equitable access.

Your pledge to distribute vaccines in a manner that prioritizes fairness and evenhandedness is laudable, but action is needed to ensure it applies to all Americans regardless of where they live or their socioeconomic status.

I thank you for your time and attention to this pressing matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jaime Herrera Beutler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress